

Introduction

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IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR SIZE, most libraries today face or will face sometime in their future the problem of what to do about the lack of space. In the now world of libraries, there are a number of inescapable givens: 1) the publication of information has grown astronomically, 2) the explosion of information shows no sign of abatement, 3) the compulsion (which affluency nurtures) to acquire all material in all languages and all media has become a library hang-up, 4) the cure for kicking this habit, to collect exhaustively, is more expensive and difficult to effect than was its acquisition, and finally, 5) the realization that the problem has reached crisis proportions.

As a consequence of this desperate situation libraries are intently seeking the right solution to their book storage problems, only to find there are no simple answers and no instant or right solutions. No two libraries are alike in the conditions they face; hence each must study and examine the avenues for solving its book storage problems according to *its* needs, *its* plight, and *its* resources.

The literature on the subject of book storage has been given widely scattered treatment; this issue of *Library Trends* attempts to synthesize the many viewpoints held on the subject and to deal with the alternatives for solving the problem.

An automatic response to overflowing bookstacks is to seek relief via "in-house" practices. Roscoe Rouse, while extolling the praises of the librarian who can "make space out of nothing," nevertheless cautions that the procedures he uses must be considered as stop-gap measures, which in the end may be more expensive than facing the problem squarely. The opening chapter touches on many of the more commonly used practices, e.g., weeding of collections, restricted acquisitions policies, shelving of books by size, shelving on the fore-edge,

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allowing minimal shelf space for expansion, and shelving two and three deep. To give his chapter an empirical base, Rouse constructed a questionnaire, which he sent to 200 libraries, on book space needs and specific solutions attempted. His article reports his findings.

According to Herman Totten, to store or not to store is the basic question. Totten reviews the important considerations for determining what materials are to be stored—that is, the materials that are the least used. He also raises the more pertinent question of how to determine the future use of these materials.

Compact storage without resorting to added equipment is explored in the article by Manuel Lopez. Lopez brings into sharp focus many of the very same “home remedy” solutions introduced in the Roscoe Rouse article, but he concentrates on the important aspects (although they are too often the disregarded and intangible aspects) of utilizing conventional compactions.

There has been a great deal written on the subject of compact book storage equipment, and a *Library Trends* article of not too many years ago covered the subject thoroughly. The chapter by Kent Schrieffer and Iva Mostecky in this issue of *Library Trends* poses this question: What can compact shelving do for the library? In answering this question, the authors choose to omit the discussion of the more conventional types of equipment. They provide instead an exciting look into the more unconventional systems that are available today.

Among the several options available outside the library for solving book storage problems is relocation or decentralization. J. Michael Bruno divides the various forms of decentralization into “two species,” viz., the “operations-oriented” and the “user- and subject-oriented” types. For the first category, the decision to decentralize is based on the kinds of forms and materials, as exemplified by libraries for rare books, map collections, documents, etc.; the second category subsumes graduate and professional school libraries, laboratory collections, and separate undergraduate collections. Bruno reviews and analyzes once more the advantages and disadvantages of decentralization.

Another off-site alternative for finding more space for continually expanding collections is cooperative storage. One can liken this measure, which is utilized by various libraries, to the phenomenon of communal living utilized by various elements of our now generation. H. Joanne Harrar, who has long been interested in this subject, postulates that libraries resort to cooperative storage facilities because they hope to effect economies and to achieve an extension of their resources. Her

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conclusion is that the principal value of the cooperative warehouse storage concept is not that any economies have been achieved but rather that libraries *can* cooperate. She exhorts the profession to explore other modes of cooperation.

One such alternative mode is communications networks: William Budington, however, views library networks not so much as vehicles to alleviate storage problems, but more as avenues to enhance accessibility to information resources. Nevertheless, he maintains, "One may consider their success as preventive therapy, making unnecessary the duplicative acquisition of such resources by the participants. . . . [and that implicitly there is the possibility] of removing some portion of a crowded collection, if the removed segment is already available in or becomes part of an accessible organized resource."

Some librarians would view the *tabula rasa* approach as the most exciting solution to their spatial problems. Indeed, the prospect of erecting a new building—to design and plan an edifice to achieve the best for all of their concerns for staff, users, and materials—comes once in a lifetime. William Ernst reviews a variety of approaches ranging from climbing skyward to going underground. But, he hints that even this alternative becomes circular, i.e., "Plan as they may, libraries usually seem to be in the position of having completely filled such space [i.e., new building] much sooner than anticipated."

In the final paper of this issue, Rolland Stevens hails the microform revolution as *the* alternative to pursue rather than resorting to: extending stack areas; decentralizing the collection; using compact shelving, with or without compactions; participating in cooperative storage agreements; or any other method, explicit or implied, which has already been covered in this issue. Stevens carefully develops the history of the use of microforms in libraries in terms of the space-saving factor.

What solution is the best? Indeed, that is difficult, if it is at all possible to ascertain. There are no panaceas, and even new buildings do not always provide the hoped-for solution. Suffice it to say that it is the sophistication of the librarian and his knowledge of the various alternatives from which he may choose which will determine the route or routes a particular library will take toward solving its space problems.